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H. I. McCUBBIN

B. B. DAHL

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# *FAMILIES IN THE MILITARY SYSTEM*

PREPARED BY INTER-UNIVERSITY SEMINAR ON ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

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## Chapter 5

### *PROLONGED FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE MILITARY:*

#### *A LONGITUDINAL STUDY*

HAMILTON I. McCUBBIN  
BARBARA B. DAHL

The Department of Defense and the family in the military system, two profoundly important social institutions, compete for the same resource—the serviceman. In time of war, the former takes control while the family waits for the termination of conflict or for the man to fulfill his commitment to his country, an obligation which, in its extreme, may even result in his death. The Vietnam conflict, because of its length and its unpopularity with a vast sector of the American citizenry, placed even greater stresses upon the families whose sons, husbands, and fathers were serving their country. When one considers the sensitivity of the public to the manner in which this war was conducted and the contagiously strong feelings against American involvement in Vietnam, it is not surprising to find that a number of researchers have focused their attention upon this war and its complexities.

As the war continued, the number of family casualties—Americans bereaved by the death of an immediate family member—mounted. Lieberman (1971a, b) reported estimates of family casualties as of 1971: 30,000 widows and orphans, 80,000 parents, 60,000 grandparents, and approximately 80,000 brothers and sisters; at least 250,000 Americans experienced the loss of an immediate family member! Much smaller in number, but of definite significance, were the 608 [1] held in limbo by the classification of their sons or husbands as prisoners of war

**AUTHORS' NOTE:** This chapter is an expanded and integrated version of two previous reports: (1) "The Returned Prisoner of War: Factors in Family Reintegration," which appeared previously in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1975 (August), pp. 471-478; and (2) "Children of Returned Prisoners of War: The Effects of Long Term Father Absence," paper presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, August, 1975.

(PW). Although little has been written about this situation by scholars of the American family, this is not necessarily unexpected given the absence of data on the military family. Furthermore, the public seems to accept tacitly casualties and the disruption of families as a fact of war.

On the other hand, the importance of determining the effects of war upon the family has been acknowledged by social scientists (Bey and Lange, 1974; Boulding, 1950; Hill, 1949; Lieberman, 1971a, b; Waller, 1944). Considering the intensity of discussions already devoted to the subject of the military family (Bennett et al., 1974), the evolution of social institutions devoted to keeping alive the public consciousness of the plight of these families (Powers, 1974), and the volumes of printed rhetoric proclaiming the importance of the military family, one cannot help but be concerned about the paucity of data for this population. Its priority relative to the political and medical aspects of the war was certainly lower than specialists in family research would have considered desirable.

In light of the importance of and need for studies on the general subject of the Southeast Asian conflict and the adjustment of the military family to the war, longitudinal research had been proposed for the study of families of prisoners of war as an ongoing research effort initiated by specialists of the Family Studies Branch of the Center for Prisoner of War Studies (Plag, 1974). The present chapter deals with data derived from this longitudinal study and focuses upon family adjustment to separation and reunion.

## RESEARCH LITERATURE

### Family Adjustment to Separation and Reunion

Over the years behavioral scientists have continued to extrapolate and document lessons learned from prisoner of war experiences. The classic studies of the trauma of concentration camps (Bettelheim, 1953; Eitinger, 1964; Frankl, 1968), prisoner of war experiences (Biderman, 1967), stresses of captivity (Schein, 1957; Schein, Schneir, and Barker, 1961), and coping behavior in captivity (Ballard, 1973) indicated the significance of these unique experiences and their possible influence upon the longitudinal adjustment of repatriated prisoners (Schein, Cooley, and Singer, 1960; Segal, 1973). In contrast, there is a paucity of research attempting to answer questions surrounding the adjustment of families of prisoners of war (PW), family adjustment during the internment

period, and the role families play in the long-term rehabilitation of repatriated prisoners.

Although existing research on the general problems of family adjustment to father separation in the military indicates the importance of this line of inquiry (McCubbin, Hunter, and Dahl, 1975), the adaptation of the PW family to an indeterminate and unprecedented length of father absence has only been alluded to in past research. Even though PW families were present at Schilling Manor, Allen (1972) did not isolate these families for special study. Recent papers by Spolyar (1973), Hall and Simmons (1973), and Brown (1972) attempted to describe the grieving process, adjustment problems, and coping behaviors both of families of prisoners of war and of servicemen missing in action; however, none of these studies was based on any systematic assessment of such families, and specific consideration was not given to families of those held as prisoners of war.

More recently, studies concerning families of returned prisoners of war (RPW) from the Vietnam conflict have emphasized the stresses associated with the prolonged separation and the importance of these stresses in determining how families adjust after reunion. Family problems and stresses which emerged during the separation period, while the husband was held captive in Southeast Asia, have been linked to the initial readjustment problems of the returning prisoner of war (McCubbin, Hunter, and Dahl, 1975). These researchers have emphasized that problems unique to the families in the PW situation, particularly the prolonged and indeterminate absence of the father/husband, have encouraged families to develop behaviors which might actually lessen the probability of a successful postreunion adjustment. The waiting wife, functioning as head of the household, often matures, develops greater independence and self-confidence, and provides a life style for her family in the absence of a husband or father.

In another study (McCubbin and Dahl, 1974b, c), returnees' self-reports of ability to endure the hardships of captivity were positively correlated with family adjustment at time of reunion. However, it is still unclear from the family research conducted by the Center for Prisoner of War Studies (McCubbin, Dahl, Metres, Hunter, and Plag, 1974) what combination of factors best explains the nature of family reintegration following a prolonged separation. It remains to be determined why some families overcome the stresses of separation and reintegration with time, while others experience severe disruptions and have great difficulty achieving stability. On the basis of his WW II study, Hill (1949) concluded that the processes of adjustment involved in family reunions after prolonged separations could not be properly understood without taking into consideration the family's history, characteristics of family members, their adjustment to the separation period, as well as the family dynamics at the time reunion occurred.



### Children's Adjustment to Separation and Reunion

While studies on father absence have stressed the importance of (a) the age of the child during father absence, (b) the sex of the child, and (c) the length of father absence, their results are contradictory, findings being confounded by type of father absence—i.e., death, divorce, desertion, or military service—the availability of father substitutes, and by other environmental factors (Baker, Cove, Fagen, Fischer, and Janda, 1968; Hetherington, 1972; Lynn, 1974; Santrock, 1972; Trunnell, 1968a, b).

Some researchers, in discussing father separation, focus on the absence of the instrumental leader in the family (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Zelditch, 1955). They point to father as the parent who stresses delay of immediate gratification in the interest of greater future rewards. Father is seen as the parent who represents for the children the rules and principles of society. Still other scientists (Bandura and Walters, 1959; Biller, 1968; Mowrer, 1950; Sears, Rau, and Alpert, 1965) emphasize the importance of a masculine model in the home, not only for the boy's sex-role development but for the girl's as well. Social workers, in a study by Stephens (1961), described fatherless boys as anxious about sex and as effeminate. According to one study (Douvan and Adelson, 1966), adolescent boys living with their mothers, as a defense against anxiety about their insecure masculinity, swaggered and put up a front of exaggerated self-confidence; they rejected men and rebelled against adult authority.

The unfavorable consequences of father absence may manifest themselves at an earlier age in boys than in girls. The absence of the father may cause problems as the young boy shifts from mother to masculine identification. In a study of father-absent eight- and nine-year-old Norwegian sailor and whaler children (Lynn and Sawrey, 1959), the father-separated boys, insecure in their masculinity, struggled to resemble the father but reacted with compensatory masculine bravado. In addition, the father-absent boys showed poorer peer adjustment than either the father-present boys or the father-absent girls. There were no findings to suggest the negative influence of father absence on the girls' femininity. Tiller (1961), in another study of father absence among Norwegian children, found that although both the boys and the girls were negatively affected by lack of father's presence, the boys manifested more detrimental effects than the girls.

Although the girl, in response to the absence of an adult male with whom to relate, may not manifest problems early, difficulties in relating to males might be expected to surface during adolescence when interest in the opposite sex heightens. Hetherington (1972), in her investigation of the effects of paternal absence on personality development in adolescent daughters, compared three groups of adolescent girls: (a) those from intact families; (b) those from divorced

families; and (c) those from families in which the father was absent because of death. Results indicated that daughters without fathers felt less personal control over the course of their lives and reported themselves as more anxious than girls from intact homes. The main finding, however, was that the effects of father absence were manifested by an inability of these adolescent girls to relate appropriately to men and male peers.

Paternal absence occurring in the early years, i.e., the "formative years," is frequently associated with more detrimental consequences than when it occurs later (Anderson, 1968; Seplin, 1952). As with Hetherington's (1966) earlier findings in a study with father-absent boys and in her 1972 study, described above, the loss of the father when the girls were young (before age five) was more damaging than later father separation (after age five). Pedersen and Sullivan (1964), in one of the few studies of the effects of father absence on military children, found that 59 percent of the children referred to a child guidance clinic for emotional disturbance had had some period of extended paternal absence during their first five years of development.

Many investigators have also shown a relationship between the length of absence and children's emotional adjustment. In another study of children whose fathers were absent owing to military service, Gabower (1959) found that fathers of disturbed children were gone more frequently and for longer periods of time. Trunnell's study (1968) of children under 18 years of age seen for psychiatric diagnosis in an outpatient clinic revealed that the longer the father was absent and the younger the child at the time of his absence, the greater the degree of psychopathology.

Investigations conducted by the Center for Prisoner of War Studies, before and after the return of American prisoners from Southeast Asia, pointed out the importance of utilizing a longitudinal approach when studying the long-term effects of separation on children of these men (McCubbin, Hunter, and Dahl, 1975; McCubbin, Hunter, and Metres, 1974); however, the existing studies are basically descriptive in nature (Benson, McCubbin, Dahl, and Hunter, 1974; McCubbin, Hunter, and Metres, 1974). At present, there are no studies comparing this population (PW) of children with a normative group.

It is paradoxical that, while professionals are expected to continue the extension of comprehensive medical, legal, psychological, psychiatric, and social work services to repatriated prisoners and their families, we as yet lack clarity regarding the nature and extent of the problems the families faced in the past, the family dynamics associated with their adjustment to the prolonged separation, the family's adjustment to father's (PW) return, and the impact of separation and reunion upon the children's emotional and social development. Knowledge of the history of family adjustment is essential to the establishment of counseling and treatment relationships and to the development of family services.

The present research was directed toward studies of family adjustment and reintegration occasioned by husband/father absence and subsequent reunion. In the face of prolonged and indeterminate absence of a husband/father, how do families adapt as a unit? What are the residuals of this experience in terms of the family's ability to reintegrate and to renegotiate role relationships following the return of the servicemen? What are the long-term effects of both separation and reunion upon family stability and upon the emotional health of its individual members, particularly the children? Deriving answers to questions such as these constitutes goals of the present investigation.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Because of the complexity of the methods and sampling involved, this longitudinal investigation, the study of the family's adjustment to separation, the factors involved in family reintegration following husband's (PW) return, and the children's adjustment to separation and reunion, it was essential that the methods and results be presented independently.

### PHASE I

#### Family Adjustment to Separation

Phase I of the study reported here, in part, represented an effort to determine the nature and extent of adjustment problems experienced by families of prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. These families were studied solely because they were in a unique situation of adapting to the prolonged and indeterminate absence of a husband (PW), not because they had been referred for help with emotional, financial, or medical problems. The underlying assumption was that when a family is called upon to adapt to the absence of a husband/father listed as a prisoner in a war zone, the occurrence of adjustment problems (in the broadest sense) must be expected. The study was conducted during the period from April 1972 to December 1972, by the staff of the Center for Prisoner of War Studies (CPWS) before the repatriation of American PWs from Southeast Asia. Families included in the study were drawn from the total population of men listed as prisoners of war (PW) by the Service Departments of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The sample was limited to families of *procreation* (those in which the PW serviceman had a status of spouse) because of their



"dependent" status and the responsibility of each of the armed services to provide them comprehensive care during the serviceman's absence.

The sample consisted of 100 families, approximately 50 percent of the total number of wives of servicemen listed as PWs by each service—Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The vast majority (76 percent) of the sample was represented by Navy families, followed by the Army (16 percent), and, in turn, the Marine Corps (8 percent). The sample included 204 children. Ninety-two percent of the sample were families of commissioned officer personnel; an additional 1 percent were those of warrant officers; and 7 percent were families of enlisted personnel.

A structured interview format was used for conducting each family interview. Single in-depth interviews, ranging in length from two to eight hours, were conducted with PW wives located throughout the Continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Europe. The 100 interviews were conducted by the professional staff of the CPWS Family Studies Branch, consisting of a Navy psychiatrist, civilian clinical psychologists, military and civilian social workers, with assistance by clinical social workers of the U.S. Army. The Army social workers were selected on the basis of their extensive experience with military families and were given additional orientation with respect to the PW situation and training in the application of the structured interview schedule.

The interview schedule was used to ensure the systematic collection of data. The questions elicited specific demographic information and data related to family history as well as psychological, social, and medical factors conceivably related to family and individual adjustment. During the nine months of data gathering, the interview schedule was revised on two occasions, resulting in varying numbers of respondents on particular items. Those families indicating active social, psychological, medical, legal, or financial adjustment problems were referred to appropriate civilian or military resources for continuing assistance.

### Family Adjustment to Separation—Results

*The Situation.* The situation common to these families was that each had been confronted with a military report of casualty followed by a listing of their husbands/fathers as prisoners of war. The length of absence of these men extended from one year to over eight years. Fifty-four (54 percent) of these absences had extended over a period of from five to eight and one-half years.

*PW Family Characteristics.* The ages of wives in this sample of families ranged from 20 to 49, with an average of 31.1 years at the time of the interview. The educational level of the majority of wives was in excess of fourteen years; over one-third had earned college degrees. The average length-of marriage before

separation was five years. Prior marriages were infrequent for both husbands and wives (6%). At the time of the interview, extended families (both or either parent) existed for most of the PW husbands (90%) and wives (95%). Religious affiliations varied, however, with both husbands (66.4%) and wives (61.5%) being predominantly Protestant. While the families averaged two children, 20 (20%) had no children. The 204 children ranged in age from less than 1 year to 25 years, with the majority between the ages of 8 and 15.

*Coping with the Unknown: Role Adjustments.* Families adapted to new responsibilities with modifications in family roles accompanied by related anxieties, frustrations, and feelings of insecurity engendered by the husband/father absence. Not surprisingly, the majority of the wives (76.7%) reported the lack of husband's companionship as the most difficult problem with which they had to cope. Concomitantly, difficulties with feelings of loneliness, making decisions alone, lack of suitable social outlets, concern for personal health, and guilt feelings about their change in role were emphasized by the wives as additional problem areas. Traditional responsibilities were intensified for the wife who, as a result of the situation, was tasked with the dual mother-father role. Twenty-nine were employed on either a full- or part-time basis; however, over two-thirds of the group (67%) were unemployed. Disciplining of the children, handling of family finances, and the health of the children were cited as additional disturbing family problems. Role adjustment problems are presented in Table 1.

During this period of prolonged husband absence, the wives involved themselves in a wide range of activities which, for the most part, appeared to enhance self-esteem and occupy them mentally and emotionally. Participation in national and local efforts to clarify their husbands' casualty status provided a social and emotional outlet for the majority of the wives. Their responses indicated that hobbies, television, and social group functions were additional activities which ranked high, with military service club activities receiving less emphasis than the other four areas mentioned.

Adaptation of the family to its inherent social responsibilities required that family members, the wife in this particular situation, have the authority to negotiate all legal transactions. This area of responsibility proved to be one of unexpected difficulty. Although less than one-third of the families emphasized legal problems as a major area of difficulty encountered during the period of husband/father absence, when these problems did occur, they affected the family's financial stability and credibility and mitigated the family's ability to plan for the future. Working against the traditional identity of the dependent wife, the PW wives were called upon to assert themselves, gain control of the family, and establish themselves as the rightful and legal representatives of their absent husbands and the family.

TABLE I  
ROLE ADJUSTMENTS

<i>Adjustment Problems</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Number of Positive Responses</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Lack of husband's companionship	60	46	72.3
Feelings of extreme loneliness	60	28	48.2
Making decisions alone	60	25	39.8
Lack of social outlets	60	19	27.7
Disciplining children	60	14	18.7
Time for dual mother-father role	60	10	18.1
Handling family finances	59	5	13.9
Health of wife	60	5	10.8
Health of children	60	3	4.2

*Wife's Perception of the Marriage.* In contrast with the wives' retrospective assessment of their marriages prior to casualty, in which over three-fourths (79.6%) of the group indicated satisfaction with the marriage, only 44.8% felt satisfaction with the marriage at the time of the interview. This change in feelings about the marriage was evident in other areas, such as the increase (12.1%) in the number of wives planning divorces, as shown in Table 2.

*Physical and Emotional Health of the PW Wife.* In general, the wives maintained surveillance over their health, and on the average, had received a thorough physical examination within the fifteen-month period preceding the interview. At the time of the interview the wives were asked to evaluate, retrospectively, their health status during their husbands' absence. Data from the interviews showed that a smaller percentage of the wives (3%) rated their general health as a handicap during the period of husband absence than they would have rated it prior to the husbands' casualty (6%).

Emotional and psychological adjustment appeared to be an area of greater difficulty. Out of 12 emotional symptoms covered by the interviewer, nearly two-thirds (64%) of the sample reported having experienced five or more symptoms during the period of husband absence (see Table 3).



TABLE 2

## PW WIFE'S PERCEPTION OF HER MARRIAGE

<i>Wife's Assessment</i>	<i>Precausalty</i>		<i>At Time of Interview</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Divorce/separation requested	0	0.0	0	0.0
Divorce/separation planned	1	1.7	8	13.8
Uncertain about future of marriage	4	6.8	1	1.7
Major problems, poor relationship	2	3.4	15	25.9
Minor problems, fair relationship	5	8.5	8	13.8
Good relationship	13	22.0	6	10.3
Excellent relationship	34	57.6	20	34.5
Total	59	100.0	58	100.0

Additional indices of emotional adjustment noted were that over half the group (50.6%) were taking or had taken tranquilizers during their husbands' absence, and 40.5 percent had experienced body weight fluctuations of 15 pounds or more during that period. Almost half the group (49.2%) indicated they were nonsmokers. Of those who smoked, 22 percent reported they now smoked more heavily than they had prior to the husband's casualty. Slightly over 8 percent were nondrinkers. Among the drinkers, 27.7 percent found they consumed alcoholic beverages more frequently since casualty than they had prior to casualty. For 5 percent of all the wives interviewed, alcoholism was reported to be a potential, if not an already existent, problem. Over one-third (36.1%) of the group reported frequent feelings that life was meaningless, and 33.9% reported entertaining suicidal thoughts at some time during their husband's absence, although only 20.3% felt they had ever really seriously considered suicide.

TABLE 3

## PW WIFE'S EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Depressed, "down in dumps"	83	100	83.0
Jumpiness, "uptight"	71	100	71.0
Fitful Sleep	55	90	61.1
Difficulty falling asleep	60	100	60.0
Waking, not rested	51	90	56.7
Bored	44	88	50.0
Rapid mood fluctuations	47	100	47.0
Headaches	40	100	40.0
Feeling life is meaningless	35	97	36.0
Poor digestion	35	100	35.0
Shortness of breath	22	100	22.0
Accident-prone	16	88	18.2

*Adaptation to Emotional Stress.* The sample of 100 wives reported a wide range of symptoms related to emotional and social adjustment that they found to be moderately or severely difficult to manage. In many instances the families sought professional help to cope with the situation.

Interview data revealed that 37 percent of the wives were either receiving treatment (5%) for emotional problems or had been in treatment (32%) at some time during the husband's absence. Based upon evaluations made by the interviewers, which reflected either direct or indirect evidence of disabling anxiety, depression, psychosomatic complaints, guilt feelings, or dysfunctional family interactions, an additional 44 percent of the wives appeared to be in need of psychological assistance (see Table 4). Further, based upon the interviewers' evaluations of present problems and the wives' reports of anticipated future

problems, it appeared probable that approximately 75 percent of the families would benefit from marriage or family counseling at the time of release of the PWs and during the period immediately thereafter.

*Adjustment of Children of PW Families.* The physical and emotional adjustments of children of prisoners of war are important indices of both individual and family adjustment. Children's problems represent another source of stress for both the mother and the family unit. Only three of the mothers (6.7%) reported that the physical health of children presented major problems during the husband's absence. The most frequently reported physical health problems among this group of 204 children were the common childhood diseases, accidental injuries, and surgery.

In contrast with the children's physical status, their emotional adjustment appeared more problematic. One-half of the PW children were judged by their mothers to have had significant emotional problems during the period of father absence. For the families with children, the most frequently reported symptoms reflecting adjustment difficulties were unwarranted and frequent crying (10.8%), fear of the dark (10.8%), nightmares (9.3%), nail-biting (8.8%), shyness (7.8%), and rebelliousness (7.4%). Social and interpersonal adjustments of the children were also areas of concern to the mothers. Fourteen children (6.9%) were reported to have displayed behavior problems in the school setting and an equal

TABLE 4

PSYCHOLOGICAL/PSYCHIATRIC COUNSELING RECEIVED  
BY OR RECOMMENDED FOR PW WIVES

<i>Status at Time of Interview</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent*</i>
Wives receiving treatment	5	5.0
Wives who received treatment in past, but not now in treatment	32	32.0
Wives who never received treatment	62	62.0
Wives for whom treatment was recommended who were not in treatment	44	44.0
Families who might need counseling at time of repatriation	75	75.0

\*N = 100



percentage had difficulty with peer relationships (6.9%). Behavior problems at home (5.4%) and poor relationships with mother (6.4%) or other adults (3.4%) were areas of additional concern for the mothers.

*Use of Children's Services.* In general, the mothers attempted to seek the assistance of mental health professionals when they felt their children had emotional problems. Of the 69 children judged by their mothers to have displayed emotional or adjustment problems, 37 children (53.6%) had received or were receiving professional counseling. The interviewers made a clinical judgment of the children's need for psychological or psychiatric assistance on the basis of mothers' comments and their reports of the children's behaviors and symptomatology during father absence. On the basis of the clinical judgments made at the time of the interview, it would appear that 40 (19.6%) of the 204 children would have benefited from professional counseling (see Table 5).

### Concerns about Family Reunion

The wives' concerns about reuniting with their husbands provided an index of future adjustment difficulties. For the wives, it represented a critical time of accounting for their stewardships during the husbands' absence. For other wives,

TABLE 5

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL/PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT RECEIVED BY OR RECOMMENDED FOR PW CHILDREN

<i>Status at Time of Interview</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent*</i>
Children receiving treatment	9	4.4
Children who received treatment in past but not now in treatment	16	7.8
Children who were never in treatment	<u>179</u>	<u>87.7</u>
Totals	204	100.0
Children for whom counseling was recommended who were not already in treatment	40	19.6

\*Based upon the total number of children in the sample N = 204

repatriation meant facing the increased possibility that their husbands were not coming back. The wives' primary concern about the postrepatriation period was what their husbands' reaction would be to their increased independence (46.0%). Handling of finances and dating were further concerns voiced by the wives. A few of the wives expressed concern over the husbands' evaluation of the manner in which the children had been reared (see Table 6).

Repatriation also meant the wives had to come to terms with their fantasies about the husband's physical and emotional status. The majority (68.7%) of the wife group emphasized their concern over the husbands' ability to adjust to the rapid social change which had occurred during their absence. Slightly over half the wives indicated concern about their husbands' health, and over one-third noted their own anxieties about their husbands' ability to assume the husband and father roles and to continue a career in the military. Of those families with children (N = 80), one-third of the wives expressed concern about their husbands' ability to cope with their children's problems.

The wives emphasized the need for family and individual services at the time of their husbands' repatriation. Heading the list of desired services were occupational counseling (63.6%), educational counseling (62.6%), and psychological counseling (57.6%) for the returning men. Over half of the wives emphasized the need for job retraining for the husband, while slightly under half acknowledged the need for marriage and family counseling and legal counseling at the time of repatriation. Other anticipated needs were financial and spiritual counseling.

TABLE 6

## WIVES' CONCERNS ABOUT REPATRIATION

<i>Concern</i>	<i>Positive Responses</i>	<i>Percent*</i>
Becoming too independent	28	46.0
Not saving more money	13	21.3
Dating	12	20.0
Manner in which children raised	10	16.0
Drinking too much	3	5.0

\*N = 61 due to revised questionnaire

## PHASE II

Phase II of the investigation was designed to determine what combination of factors best explain the dynamics of family reintegration following a prolonged separation. Families of prisoners of war who were interviewed in 1972, to assess the dynamics of their adjustment to prolonged separation, were involved again in the longitudinal study in 1973, twelve months following their husbands' (PW) return.[2] Specifically, in this phase, four groups of data were used as predictors of family adjustment 12 to 16 months following the return of American PWs from Southeast Asia (SEA): demographic data, indices of family adjustment to separation, psychiatric evaluations of the fathers/husbands (returnees) at the time of their return, and the returnees' perceptions of the hardships of captivity.

### Family Reintegration Following Prolonged Separation—Method

Subjects for this phase of the investigation consisted of 48 Navy families of returned American prisoners of the Vietnam War. The families were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) the wives of the returned prisoners (returnees) of war, prior to the repatriation of their husbands and before having received word of their husbands' eventual return, had discussed their feelings and hardships experienced during the separation with the staff from the Center as part of the 1972 survey; (2) the returnees had received a complete psychiatric examination immediately following their repatriation from Vietnam; and (3) the returnees had participated in a one-year follow-up study of family adjustment by completing a questionnaire mailed to them approximately 12 months following their return.

In comparing the original sample of families and this follow-up sample with regard to nine characteristics,[3] only length of time spent in captivity showed a statistically significant difference, returnees participating in the follow-up inquiry having spent more months in captivity. Other variables highly correlated with months in captivity, such as pay grade and age, were not found to be significantly different. On the whole, differences between respondents were not pronounced and were not considered to be ones which would result in data biases.

For the purpose of deriving a composite of variables to explain the degree of family reintegration following years of separation, social change, and possible changes in the individual family members, it was essential to emphasize the use of longitudinal data which take both time and change into consideration. Data were obtained from five independent sources: (1) master files of personnel



records which provided the needed background information on the returnees: (2) in-depth interviews[4] conducted in 1972 with wives of PWs; (3) medical records[5] which indicated the psychiatric status or functioning of the returnees based on examinations made at the time of their repatriation; (4) a Captivity Questionnaire[6] completed by the returnees regarding their perceptions of the stresses associated with the captivity experience; and (5) a follow-up mailed questionnaire[7] completed by the returnees 12 to 16 months following their repatriation and family reunion in early 1973.

The predictor variables were the following: I. *BACKGROUND/PRE-CASUALTY VARIABLES*. Husband's characteristics: (1) age at time of casualty; (2) rank/rate at time of casualty; (3) years of formal education; (4) degrees/diplomas earned; (5) previous marriages; and (6) preparation for separation—number of tasks completed by the husband to prepare his family for separation (power of attorney, legal will, etc.). Wife's characteristics: (7) age at time of casualty; (8) years of formal education; (9) degrees/diplomas earned; and (10) previous marriages. Family characteristics: (11) length of courtship; (12) length of marriage; (13) quality of marriage—wife's retrospective rating of the quality of marriage before casualty; (14) number of children; and (15) reasons for the last tour to SEA—personal request versus military requirement. II. *CAPTIVITY/SEPARATION*. Husband's adjustment to captivity: (16) time spent in captivity; (17) time spent in solitary confinement; (18) perceived physical abuse in captivity; (19) perceived psychological coercion in captivity; (20) perceived threats and promises in captivity; (21) adaptability—personal qualities (self-understanding, tolerance, patience, etc.) which the men valued and felt might have aided them in enduring the hardships of captivity; and (22) value of family in coping—the degree to which the husbands felt that letters and thoughts of family, home, and future aided them in enduring the hardships of captivity. Wife's adjustment to separation: (23) length of separation; (24) number of letters received from her husband; (25) number of role adjustment problems; (26) number of legal problems; (27) number of financial problems; (28) symptoms of strain and tension—number of emotional tensions experienced by the wife; (29) social activities—the number of social activities in which the wife took part during the separation period; (30) independence—the number of "independent" activities in which the wife engaged (working, etc.); (31) self-reliance—the degree to which the wife relied on herself, rather than outside help, to cope with the hardships of separation; (32) participation in PW/MIA activities—the degree to which the wife participated in local and national PW/MIA activities designed to facilitate the husband's return; (33) perceived quality of the marriage—the wife's assessment of her marriage at time of the interview (during husband's absence); (34) relationships with own parents—wife's assess-

ment of the quality of her relationship with her parents; (35) relationship with in-laws wife's assessment of the quality of her relationship with her husband's parents; (36) emotional adjustment- whether or not the wife experienced emotional difficulty for which she was recommended for professional counseling; and (37) anticipated hardships of reunion- the number of apprehensions and concerns expressed by the wives regarding family reunion (marital conflict, child adjustment, husband's health, etc). Family characteristics: (38) maintaining father's role the amount of effort exerted by the family to maintain father's image and role in the family (photos, discussions, planning for the future); (39) children's emotional adjustment- whether any of the children had been in, were presently in, or were recommended for professional counseling. III. *REPATRIATION/REUNION*. Husband's emotional stability: at time of repatriation as evidenced by the psychiatrists' assessment of the returnee's (40) interpersonal functioning, and (41) affect. The predictor variables, the source of each variable, and the classification of these variables relative to time are presented in Table 7.

The degree of family reintegration was the criterion used in this study. Hill (1949), in his study of family adjustment to the crises of war separation and reunion, developed a questionnaire to measure the relative success of the returning servicemen in their adjustment to family reunion. Specifically, Hill's questionnaire was designed to provide an index of the serviceman's success in developing or reestablishing bonds of coherence and family unity of which the husband-wife relationship, the division of labor within the home, the reallocation of roles, and the father-child relationship are paramount. Hill (1949) defined adjustment to reunion as the process of opening the family ranks to include father, realigning power and authority, reworking the division of labor and responsibility, sharing the home and family activities with father, renewing the husband-wife intimacies and confidences, assuming father-child ties, and bringing balance between husband-wife, mother-child, and father-child relationships. Hill's Family Reunion Questionnaire was modified for the present study; additional items were introduced, particularly with regard to father-child relationships, and a few items in the questionnaire were altered to focus upon the returning PW and his family.

The resulting 50 items of the Family Reunion Questionnaire were tested individually ( $N = 66$ )[9] with respect to their discriminant function, i.e., the degree to which they discriminated between families who experienced family discord, separations, or divorces, and those families which remained intact. The resulting 17 statistically significant items were factor-analyzed to find a set of independent dimensions with which all the relationships existing among the pool of items could be described in the simplest manner. A  $17 \times 17$  correlation matrix with unity in the main diagonal was subjected to a principal components factor

**TABLE 7**  
**PREDICTOR VARIABLES AND CRITERION**

Background Information Personal:	Captivity/Separation	Reparation/Return	Fellow-LP
I. HUSBAND/PW/RETURNEE: educationΔ <sup>*</sup> rankΔ <sup>*</sup> previous marriages <sup>*</sup> ageΔ <sup>*</sup> preparation for separation0 degrees/diplomas earnedΔ	time in captivity++ physical abuse++ psychological coercion++ threats and promises++ adaptability0 value of family in coping0 time in solitary confinementΔ	interpersonal functioning+ affect+	
II. WIFE: age* previous marriages* education* degrees/diplomas earnedΔ	length of separationΔ <sup>*</sup> letters from PW* role adjustment problems* legal problems* financial problems* social activity* independence* self-reliance* participation in PW/MIA activities* emotional adjustment* anticipated hardships of reunion* tension and strain* perceived quality of marriage* relationship with own parents* relationship with husband's parents*		
III. FAMILY/MARRIAGE: length of marriage* quality of marriage* reasons for last tour* length of courtship* number of dependent children*	maintaining father's role* children's adjustment*		FAMILY REUNIFICATION0

•Psychiatry Exam [Feb-May, 1973]	•Family Interview [Apr 1972-Jan 1973]	•Mailed Follow-Up Questionnaire 1974 [May-July 1974]	ΔCPWS Master Files
•Returnee Captivity Questionnaire [Feb-May, 1973]			



analysis by which two factors were extracted. A normalized Varimax procedure (Kaiser, 1958) was used to rotate these two factors to simple structure. To determine the stability and reliability of these factors, the 17 items were factor-analyzed on the basis of data obtained on an independent sample ( $N = 50$ ) of returnees from another branch of the armed services. The principal components analysis and Varimax rotation revealed the same two independent factors.

Factor I, the most pervasive factor in terms of the number of items (12) making up the scale, was provisionally called the Husband-Wife (H-W) Reintegration Scale. The H-W Reintegration Scale was composed of items describing the returnee's perception of the quality of the husband-wife relationship, the quality of family communication, and the meaningfulness of his role in the family. Factor II was labeled the Father-Child (F-C) Reintegration Scale. This scale of 5 items was an index of the returnee's assessment of the children's development, his feelings about the children, and the degree to which they were able to relate to each other. This study is limited to total Family Reintegration, a criterion which was created by combining the two scales to represent an index of the returnee's perceived integration into his family system.

In order to establish the degree of relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion of family reintegration, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated. This procedure permitted the identification and elimination of those variables having little or no relation to the dependent variable. Linear multiple regression procedures [10] were utilized for the purpose of analyzing the unique contribution of each of the predictors in accounting for variance in the index of family reintegration.

### Family Reintegration Following Prolonged Separation—Results

Thirty-four of the original forty-one background, captivity, and separation variables showed negligible relationships with the criterion and were eliminated from the regression analysis. The remaining seven significant variables shown in Table 8 were obtained from each of the major categories of predictors: (1) quality and length of marriage before casualty and number of dependent children were related to background characteristics; (2) quality of marriage during separation, maintenance of father/husband role during the separation period, and wife's emotional adjustment were related to the family's adjustment to separation; and (3) the returnee's "thoughts of family, career, and the future—their value in coping during captivity" were related to the returnee's captivity experience.

A regression equation was derived in which the beta weights of the predictors were statistically significant at or beyond the .05 level. The resulting three

variables shown in Table 9 yielded a multiple correlation of .70 ( $p < .001$ ). Hence the combination of three variables—wife's assessment of the quality of marriage before casualty, wife's emotional dysfunction during the separation period, and length of marriage prior to casualty—was significantly greater than any of the variables taken independently.

A reexamination of the remaining thirty-eight variables and their associations with the three significant predictors revealed unique relationships which clarified their importance and meaningfulness. The variables significantly related to length of marriage before casualty were the husbands' age ( $r = .51$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and rank ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The wives' education, demonstrated by the number of degrees/diplomas earned ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and length of courtship before marriage ( $r = .35$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significantly correlated with the wives' assessments of their marriages before casualty. The major variables affecting the wives' emotional dysfunctions during the separation period are presented in Table 10.

The fact that wives' emotional dysfunctions during the separation period emerged as the final significant, but negatively related, predictor of family

TABLE 8

CORRELATIONS OF THE SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES  
WITH THE CRITERION OF RETURNEE-FAMILY REINTEGRATION

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p &lt;</i>
Wife's assessment of the quality of the marriage during the separation	.53	.01
Length of marriage	.52	.01
Wife's assessment of the quality of the marriage before casualty	.50	.01
Maintenance of father/husband's role during the separation	.45	.01
Value of thoughts of family, career, and future in coping with captivity	.36	.05
Wife's emotional dysfunction during the separation period	-.31	.05
Number of dependent children	.30	.05

TABLE 9

MULTIPLE REGRESSION STATISTICS FOR VARIABLES  
COMPRISING REGRESSION EQUATION FOR PREDICTING  
RETURNEE-FAMILY REINTEGRATION

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Validity</i>	<i>Beta Weight</i>	<i>t Value</i>
Length of marriage before casualty	.519	.448	4.076***
Wife's assessment of quality of marriage before casualty	.505	.371	3.304**
Wife's emotional dysfunction during the separation period	-.306	-.231	-2.096*
Multiple Correlation R = .70			

\*p &lt; .05

\*\*p &lt; .01

\*\*\*p &lt; .001

TABLE 10

CORRELATIONS OF BACKGROUND AND FAMILY  
VARIABLES WITH WIFE'S EMOTIONAL  
DYSFUNCTION DURING THE SEPARATION PERIOD

<i>Variables</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p &lt;</i>
Wife's symptoms of tension	.53	.01
Quality of marriage during separation	-.50	.01
Wife's relationship with own parents	-.33	.05
Adjustment problems during the separation period: role adjustment problems, legal problems, and financial problems	.30	.05



reintegration suggests the importance and disturbing complexity of the separation period. The wives were confronted with major dilemmas which were not easily reconciled without emotional struggle.

### PHASE III

Phase III of the present investigation was concerned with the question of how the children of returned prisoners of war, who had experienced unprecedented periods of father absence owing to wartime separation, have fared. More specifically, the investigators examined the personal and social adjustment of these children as compared to a normative group.

#### Children's Adjustment to Prolonged Separation and Reunion—Method

Children were drawn from the initial representative sample of 100 families of prisoners of war originally interviewed by the Center for Prisoner of War Studies in 1972. The criteria for selection were: (1) the families had experienced father absence as a result of the father's having been taken prisoner during the Vietnam War; (2) the families had at least one child who experienced father absence; and (3) the families had experienced the return of the father from his prison experience. Of the families whose children were eligible for this part of the investigation, i.e., families with children between the ages of 5 and 18, 91.5 percent (43) participated. Families were predominantly Navy (74%), followed by the Army (21%) and the Marine Corps (5%). Thirty-eight were families of commissioned officers, two were families of warrant officers, and three were families of enlisted men. The subjects were 99 children, 55 boys and 44 girls, ranging in age from 5 to 17 years at the time of testing. The mean number of years of father absence for this group was 5.3 years.

Subjects were administered the appropriate level of the California Test of Personality (CTP), Form AA, according to their ages and grade levels. Twenty-four children were given the primary level (grades kindergarten through 3); 31 children were given the elementary level (grades 4 through 7); 18 children were given the intermediate level (grades 8 and 9); and 26 children were given the secondary level (grades 10 through 12). The children's testing was a part of the family follow-up interviews and, thus, all testing took place in the family's home. All interviews were conducted between March 1974 and January 1975, approximately 12 to 22 months after the father's return. Each subject was

instructed to complete the test on his own by either circling the appropriate response, YES or NO, or by indicating his choice to the examiner. Although no time limit was set, the majority of children took approximately 30 minutes to complete the test.

The California Test of Personality was chosen (1) because of its reported validity and reliability in numerous studies (Buros, 1970) and the availability of established norms for various age groups and grade levels; (2) because of its appropriateness for a wide range of ages; and (3) because of its organization around the concept of life adjustment as a balance between personal and social adjustment. The CTP is divided into two components: The Personal Adjustment Scale and the Social Adjustment Scale. The first component of the CTP is designed to measure six dimensions of personal adjustment: self-reliance, sense of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belonging, freedom from withdrawal tendencies, and freedom from nervous symptoms. The scales in the second component of the CTP are designed to measure six aspects of social adjustment: social standards, social skills, freedom from antisocial tendencies, family relations, school relations, and community relations. The number of correct responses is the raw score for each of the twelve component scales. A Total Personal Adjustment Score is obtained by adding the raw scores for the six personal adjustment component scales; a Total Social Adjustment Score is obtained by adding the raw scores for the six social adjustment component scales; and a Total Adjustment Score is computed by combining the Personal and Social Adjustment Scale totals.

In order to determine whether all total group means, as well as means for each level of the CTP, fell significantly below or above the normative mean, the Student *t* ratio was used. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to determine the relationship between length of father's absence and the children's social and personal adjustment.

### Children's Adjustment to Prolonged Separation and Reunion—Results

Table 11 indicates that, as a group, the RPW children's scores on the CTP, when compared with the median scores of the normative group established for the CTP, were found to be uniformly below the norm in the realms of Total Personal Adjustment [ $t(98) = -3.28, p < .005$ ], Total Social Adjustment [ $t(98) = -5.46, p < .005$ ], Total Social Adjustment [ $t(98) = -5.46, p < .005$ ] and overall Total Adjustment [ $t(98) = -4.39, p < .005$ ].

An analysis of the component scales reveals that, as a group, they obtained significantly lower scores on two of the four component scales dealing with personal adjustment: sense of personal freedom [ $t(98) = -3.16, p < .005$ ] and

TABLE 11  
COMPARISON OF THE COMBINED RPW GROUPS  
WITH THE NORMATIVE MEDIANS

<i>CTP Scales</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Personal</i>		
Self-reliance	-.48	N.S.
Sense of personal worth	-.64	N.S.
Sense of personal freedom	-3.16	< .005
Sense of belonging	-1.40	N.S.
Freedom from withdrawal tendencies	-3.50	< .005
Freedom from nervous symptoms	-.92	N.S.
Total Personal Adjustment	-3.28	< .005
<i>Social</i>		
Social standards	-.58	N.S.
Social skills	-1.43	N.S.
Freedom from antisocial tendencies	-5.43	< .005
Family relations	-4.50	< .005
School relations	-4.98	< .005
Community relations	-2.81	< .005
Total Social Adjustment	-5.46	< .005
Total Adjustment	-4.39	< .005

freedom from withdrawal tendencies [ $t(98) = -3.50, p < .005$ ]. Additionally, the group scored significantly lower on four of the six component scales dealing with social adjustment: freedom from antisocial tendencies [ $t(98) = -5.43, p < .005$ ], family relations [ $t(98) = -4.50, p < .005$ ], school relations [ $t(98) = -4.98, p < .005$ ], and community relations [ $t(98) = -2.81, p < .005$ ]. To determine whether these findings could be accounted for by specific families, the number of children of the same family who fell at the norm or 20 percentile points above or 20 percentile points below the norm was determined. The distribution did not reveal any pattern which would suggest that the findings could be accounted for by select families.

Table 12 presents a comparison of children's scores within each level (primary, elementary, intermediate, secondary) of the California Test of Per-



TABLE 12

COMPARISON OF EACH RPW GROUP  
WITH ITS NORMATIVE MEDIAN

<i>CTP Level</i>	<i>CTP Scale</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>Norm Median</i>	<i>t</i>
Primary (N=23)	Self-reliance	5.17	5.50	-1.11
	Personal worth	5.87	6.00	- .48
	Personal freedom	5.78	6.00	- .63
	Belonging	6.00	6.00	.00
	Withdrawal tend.	4.35	5.50	-2.81***
	Nervous symptoms	5.17	5.50	- .92
	Social standards	6.87	6.50	1.46
	Social skills	6.00	6.00	.00
	Antisocial tend.	5.65	6.00	-1.16
	Family relations	6.61	6.00	2.44**
	School relations	6.17	6.50	-1.36
	Community relations	6.09	6.50	-1.18
Elementary (N=32)	Self-reliance	7.00	7.50	-1.21
	Personal worth	8.47	8.00	.98
	Personal freedom	8.88	10.00	-2.90***
	Belonging	9.44	10.30	-2.57**
	Withdrawal tend.	7.31	7.00	.50
	Nervous symptoms	8.44	9.00	-1.04
	Social standards	10.34	10.50	- .65
	Social skills	8.38	9.00	-1.44
	Antisocial tend.	8.06	10.00	-4.34***
	Family relations	8.47	10.50	-3.59***
	School relations	7.66	9.00	-3.02***
	Community relations	9.25	10.50	-3.13***
Intermediate (N=18)	Self-reliance	9.89	10.50	- .13
	Personal worth	11.22	12.00	-1.15
	Personal freedom	11.17	12.00	-1.41
	Belonging	13.06	13.00	.09
	Withdrawal tend.	10.28	12.00	-2.05*
	Nervous symptoms	12.06	12.00	.08
	Social standards	12.72	13.00	- .57
	Social skills	10.50	11.00	- .64
	Antisocial tend.	10.33	12.00	-2.13*
	Family relations	10.33	13.00	-2.76***
	School relations	10.94	12.00	-1.59
	Community relations	11.94	12.00	- .09

Table cont'd

<i>CTP Level</i>	<i>CTP Scale</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>Norm Median</i>	<i>t</i>
Secondary (N=26)	Self-reliance	10.42	10.00	.91
	Personal worth	13.04	12.00	-2.94***
	Personal freedom	11.19	13.00	-2.72***
	Belonging	12.58	13.00	-1.07
	Withdrawal tend.	10.15	12.00	-3.21***
	Nervous symptoms	10.77	11.00	-.35
	Social standards	13.15	13.50	-.91
	Social skills	11.62	12.00	-.76
	Antisocial tend.	10.04	12.50	-3.51***
	Family relations	11.04	12.50	-2.54**
	School relations	9.88	12.00	-4.25***
	Community relations	10.77	12.00	-1.82*

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$ \*\*\*  $p < .005$ 

sonality with normative data for each level. As evident, significant differences were obtained in all of the grade levels, with greater differences noted in the realm of social adjustment. Children in three of the four levels, elementary, intermediate, and secondary, scored below the norm on the "family relations" scale and also obtained scores below the norm on the "freedom from antisocial tendencies" scale. Two of the four levels, elementary and secondary, scored below the norm on the "school and community relations" scales.

With respect to personal adjustment, children in three of the four levels, primary, intermediate, and secondary, obtained scores below the norm on the "Freedom from withdrawal tendencies" scale, and children in the elementary level scored below the norm on the "sense of personal freedom" and the "sense of belonging" scales. However, it is interesting to note that children in the secondary level scored above the norm on the "sense of personal worth" scale.

Correlational findings indicated the longer the period of father absence, the better was a child's Total Personal Adjustment ( $r = .300$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Total Social Adjustment ( $r = .319$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and Total Adjustment scores ( $r = .318$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In addition, findings using component scale scores indicated that the longer the absence of the father, the better were children's family relations ( $r = -.254$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the more self-reliant he became ( $r = .289$ ,  $df = 98$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In summarizing previously mentioned studies and in examining recent studies by the Center for Prisoner of War Studies, we drew the following conclusions: (1) the normal patterns of coping with father/husband absence were disturbed by the unprecedented and indeterminate length of his absence; (2) major adjustments in family roles and interaction were prominent and had, over time, become strongly entrenched patterns that usually led to a new way of life; (3) the PW wives modified their assessment of their marriages and developed new sets of expectations for the future of their present marriage or the initiation of a new marital contract; (4) the wives experienced emotional difficulties during the waiting period, and these strongly reflected the complexity and difficulty of their coping with the situation; and (5) much of the social acceptance, stability, and continuity taken for granted in the intact family were lacking or severely taxed in the family of a prisoner of war. The military family without a father lived in double isolation—as a social deviant in the military system and as an enigma to a civilian community struggling to reconcile the appropriateness of the military conflict which left this family fatherless. It appeared quite obvious that the family's functioning was influenced profoundly by the stresses brought about by the months and, in most cases, years of waiting—so obvious, perhaps, that it had either been taken for granted or forgotten and had never received careful scrutiny.

Husband/father absence within the PW situation appears to be unique; the unprecedented length of absence and its unknown and unpredictable outcome added to the complexity of the more usual separation during a routine unaccompanied tour of duty. The families were confronted with basic questions which needed to be answered to their personal satisfaction. Should they plan for the husband's eventual return or a confirmation of his death? In most cases families had to prepare for both. The shifting of family roles and responsibilities suggest the evolution of a family unit without the father. The closing of ranks within the family was suggested by Hall and Simmons (1973) as part of their clinical portrait of PW/MIA families. Hill (1949) also noted that this pattern of "closing ranks" was a common phenomenon among families experiencing father separations during World War II. While these may be indices of normal adjustment, Hill also noted that the type of reorganization which made for successful separation adjustment appeared to hinder adjustment at time of reunion.

The emotional and adjustment problems experienced by the children of PW families were not noticeably high. However, it would be premature to conclude that the separation had negligible or no effects upon the children. The French (Marcoin, personal communication, 1972 and 1975), in their assessment of PW families of the Indochina War, found both behavior and academic difficulties



among their children long after the repatriation of their fathers. Special education programs were developed specifically to assist these French children. The possible deleterious effects of father separation upon child adjustment were also underscored by Gabower (1960) in her controlled study of behavior problems of children in Navy families.

Variations in the social and psychological hardships experienced by the families indicated that the PW situation did not produce a crisis in every case. Frequent prior military tours by the husband, resulting in his absence, may have provided some wives with the experience needed to cope with the situation. Thus, adjustment may be eased by a sort of rehearsal or graduated immunization. Family life would continue, for the family who experienced frequent separations, with only a minimal break in the usual routines. In contrast, totally dependent wives, unaccustomed to the responsibilities brought about by the casualty, would be confronted with a crisis and would perhaps respond to the situation by withdrawing, thereby neglecting a host of other family responsibilities. The meaning of the PW situation varied from family to family. If, prior to casualty, husband, wife, and children had been in constant conflict, the father's absence might even be a relief, in spite of guilt feelings about his loss. However, where the family had previously worked and functioned as a unit, sharing responsibilities as well as recreation, the casualty would come as a traumatic shock, and adaptation would be extremely difficult. Where the father's role had been an integral part of the functioning of the family unit, his casualty would be a major loss.

Realistic appraisal of the wives' concerns and apprehensions about repatriation also suggested that the anticipation of reunion posed a threat to one or more of the rewards that the separations had provided, e.g., the opportunity to assume greater freedom, an independent income with the latitude to determine its use, and the avoidance of any confrontation with their husbands about the manner in which the wives conducted themselves during the husbands' absence. These apprehensions were also mentioned by Isay (1968) in his study of the submariners' wives. The French social workers (Marcoin, 1972 and 1975) cited similar problems as major areas of difficulty and as factors contributing to family discord following the repatriation of the French PWs from Indochina. Therefore, the significant relationship between these survey findings and the stresses in the husband-wife relationship following the husband's (PW) return, which was examined in Part II, is certainly not surprising.

It is of considerable interest to note, however, that in Part II of this investigation, among the variables, length of marriage has the highest correlation with the criterion of family reintegration—a finding which is inconsistent with the results of other investigations. Terman (1938), on the basis of his classic studies regarding personality and background correlates of marital happiness, questioned the importance of length of marriage as a predictor. Hill (1949)

tested the predictive validity of length of marriage, an index of familism, but was not able to confirm its importance in family adjustment to separation and reunion. In the context of the present study, a possible explanation for the discrepancy in findings might be that the process of family reintegration for returned prisoners of war is unique. The prolonged and indeterminate separations, averaging five years, produced changes in family systems, modifications in wives' personalities and expectations for the marriage, and generally altered family life styles. Thus, family reintegration following this extreme type of separation would appear to involve a basic—overt and covert—reevaluation as well as renegotiation of the marriage. Such a process necessitates taking into consideration the foundation of the marriage, its evolution, strengths, weaknesses, tensions, and fears—factors which are integral components of the length of marriage.

Studies of families during the Depression (Angell, 1936) and World War II (Hill, 1949) pointed to the importance of adequate marital adjustment and family organization to meet the crises of daily life as well as separation and reunion. The isolation of marital satisfaction before casualty as the second independent predictor of family reintegration is, in part, a confirmation of these earlier studies. A satisfactory marital situation before casualty provides a foundation for withstanding, enduring, and overcoming the stresses of separation and subsequent family reintegration. In considering the positive relationship between length of courtship and the wives' assessments of quality of marriage before casualty with the unique contribution of length of marriage, it would appear that the establishment of a relationship strong enough to endure the stresses of separation and the trials of reintegration was accomplished early in the marriage.

These findings add to the credibility of efforts to establish family counseling programs during the separation period (Powers, 1974) and give further credence to our past and present efforts to provide continuous services to families of men who have returned as well as to those families who were not so fortunate (Hunter and Plag, 1973; McCubbin and Dahl, 1974a). It is interesting to note that the emergence of the wife's emotional dysfunction as a major predictor also lends support to the extensive efforts on the part of the French military to extend social work and family counseling services to families of the French PWs held in Vietnam during the Indochina War.

It was reasonable to predict that the stresses associated with separation and reunion would have an effect upon the children. The results of Phase III, indicating that children who had experienced extended periods of father absence exhibited significantly greater difficulty with their adjustment than the norm, are in agreement with studies investigating the detrimental effects of long-term father absence (Gabower, 1960; Pedersen and Sullivan, 1964; Trunnell, 1968). The finding that, when the group as a whole was examined, more of the scores which fell below the norm were in the realm of social adjustment, would support

those investigators who view the father as the instrumental leader in the family, as the parent who represents for the children the rules and principles of society (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Zelditch, 1955). It would be expected that the children taking the intermediate and secondary levels of the test (i.e., children between the ages of 13 and 18) would, indeed, score low on such scales as family relations, freedom from antisocial tendencies, and freedom from withdrawal tendencies, since such patterns are typical of the alienation so characteristic of adolescence. However, it should be emphasized that, because these groups have been compared to age-appropriate norms, we may conclude that this sample has indicated even greater alienation. The findings that children in the secondary level scored above the norm on their sense of personal worth might be explained by the fact that, since this group represents the oldest children within these families, perhaps they were also those who became the more responsible members of the family and thus more mature. This, then, might give them a feeling of being well regarded by others and a feeling that they were respected by their families, teachers, etc., as suggested by Hillenbrand (1970).

The finding that the RPW group as a whole scored below the norm in the realm of school adjustment is interesting from the standpoint of observations shared by French social workers (Marcoin, 1972, 1975) who, in their assessment of prisoner of war families of the Indochina War, found both behavior and academic difficulties among the children long after the repatriation of their fathers and, consequently, felt the need to establish special education programs specifically designed to assist these children.

The correlational findings dealing with length of father absence are also of interest. The fact that longer periods of father absence were not more detrimental to the adjustment of the child contradict findings of earlier studies, such as those by Gabower (1959) and Trunnell (1968). It may be that within the RPW group, longer periods of father absence placed greater demands on the children of these families—greater responsibility within the family unit, more opportunities to contribute to the family well-being, as well as to the ability to do things independently of others—leading to a sense of security and self-respect in connection with the various family members. This would be particularly true of the older children within the family. Hence, the findings that the longer the period of absence, the better the family relations of the child and the more self-reliant the child became are not totally unexpected.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are two basic reasons for predicting that the returned prisoner of war (RPW) and his family would experience the difficulties of readjustment: the



special status held by the RPWs, and the fact that after a prolonged absence, in some instances as long as eight years, the returnee had to face not only an extremely changed society but also a family whose patterns of adaptation to the stresses and increased responsibilities of father absence had virtually become a new way of life.

The few recent personal reports of family experiences of American returned prisoners of the Vietnam War (Plumb, 1973; Rutledge and Rutledge 1973; Chesley, 1973; Gaither, 1973) and a recent study by the Center for Prisoner of War Studies (Metres, McCubbin, and Hunter, 1974) confirmed the hypothesis that family reunions would be stressful. The public's demands upon the returnees, changes in personalities and values, and discrepancies in expectations of both husband and wife were realistic obstacles to a successful family reunion and may be among the major contributing factors to the surprisingly high estimates of divorces[11] among the recently returned prisoners of war.

As a general rule, as time passes, marriage partners, through confrontation, communication, negotiation, and compromise, grow closer together. The void caused by the captivity experience not only prevented this normal process of marital adjustment but, in many instances, also created an even wider gap which would have to be narrowed in the postrelease period if the marriage were to survive. Although both partners had one major goal during the separation period—day-to-day survival—it is highly probable that this goal resulted in a polarization of life styles owing to the significant differences between the situational demands for survival for the prisoner of war and those placed upon his family in terms of their emotional and physical abilities to cope with daily routine. Indeed, the stresses of captivity and the stresses unique to the families in limbo encouraged each, the man and his family, to develop independently behaviors which may not be totally congruent for postrelease adjustment. During captivity the man lost his independence and became totally dependent upon his captors for even the most basic needs. Relative to life in the United States, the prisoner of war had been placed in a time capsule. His wife, on the other hand, functioned in the role of head of the household and, as a result, matured, grew independent, gained self-confidence, and developed a style of life for a family without a husband or father. Interestingly enough, the social changes which evolved during this time, in particular the movement toward women's liberation, appeared to legitimize and support the wives and their development in this direction. In fact, social change may have been a major factor in aiding the wives' overall adjustment. When the prisoner of war came home to his wife, it seemed almost inevitable that even feelings about basic family decisions, goals, and values would be at variance.

Wives were in control of the reintegration process; some, after weighing their personal feelings about the quality of their marriage before separation, and

considering their personal aspirations as well as the hardships they endured during the separation, had determined in advance of their husbands' return that they had no recourse but to terminate the marriage and begin a life for themselves. Although final decisions were often delayed until the husband and wife had had the opportunity to share their feelings openly, the outcome usually remained the same. For these families, the returning husbands were basically excluded from the decision-making process and, in most cases, tacitly accepted a decision which had previously been determined.

For the majority of the families, however, the process of reestablishing their marriages and family structure involved extensive renegotiations between marital partners. Although outweighed by other strong predictors, it did appear that the maintenance of father's role in the family unit during the separation period was important in the reintegration process. In families who left fathers' role open for renegotiation, the husbands appeared to experience greater opportunity to reestablish themselves in the family, to regain some control over the marital relationship and the family unit, and, ultimately, to have some influence upon deciding the future of the marital contract. For most families, however, the reintegration process is not complete, and for some the process will continue well into the future.

It is the opinion of the investigators that a comparison group is needed to determine whether the data on family adjustment and child adjustment would differ in any way from the adjustments made as a result of father absence brought about by a "normal" unaccompanied tour. Longitudinal data are needed regarding family and child adjustment to father absence in the military, independent of father absence brought about by military conflict. Data of this nature would be extremely valuable to the military in planning unaccompanied tours overseas and in the provision of services to families.

The findings concerning the wives' emotional health during separation and the children's personal and social adjustment following reunion point out the stresses inherent in separation and reunion and the importance of past and present efforts to extend services to families of returned prisoners of war, as well as to families of servicemen missing in action. In addition, the role of family research in the systematic, long-range planning of services to families throughout the military system was substantiated.

## NOTES

1. From figures established immediately prior to the signing of the peace treaty (January 28, 1973).

2. Of the 100 PW families interviewed in 1972, 84 (84%) had their husbands return in 1973. Data for this phase of the study were available only for families of Navy RPWs.

3. Characteristics were: (1) pay grade at time of capture; (2) age at capture; (3) time (months) in captivity; (4) years of education; (5) Academy graduate (vs. non Academy); (6) Protestant (vs. other); (7) marital status at time of capture; (8) military status at capture (Regular vs. Reserves); and (9) assignment at capture (Pilot vs. non-Pilot).

4. Family Assessment Form (FAF), a 177-item structured interview schedule used during the period April 1972-January 1973.

5. Initial Medical Evaluation Form (IMEF), Form 7, a 13 category inventory completed by the evaluating psychiatrist following the initial psychiatric examination at time of the serviceman's (PW's) return from SEA.

6. Returnee Captivity Questionnaire (IMEF, Form 6), a 35-item inventory administered at the Medical Centers processing returned PWs.

7. Survey of Returned Prisoners of War Section G, a 62-item inventory developed by the USAF in collaboration with the Center for PW Studies.

8. Predictor variables 18, 19, and 20 were obtained through a factor analysis of the Returnee Captivity Questionnaire which isolated three factors: perception of psychological coercion, perception of physical abuse, and basic threats and promises in captivity.

9. Data were available on 66 respondents who were married at time of casualty and completed the Family section (G) of the follow-up questionnaire; however, only 48 met all of the selection criteria for inclusion in this study.

10. Regression Analysis Program prepared by C.H. Nute and D.D. Beck, Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit, San Diego, California.

11. As of October 1974, the divorce/separation rate for RPWs of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps was 26.9 percent.



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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) <b>This paper covers three specific areas of family adjustment to the prisoner of war situation: (1) family adjustment to the separation period; (2) family reintegration following the separation period; and (3) children's adjustment to separation and reunion. Findings indicated that husband/father absence within the POW situation appears to be unique; the unprecedented length of absence and its unknown and unpredictable outcome added to the complexity of the more usual separation during a routine unaccompanied tour of duty. Marital</b>														



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→ satisfaction prior to the separation, length of marriage, and the wife's emotional dysfunction during the separation were all major predictors of family reintegration following the prolonged period of father/husband absence. The children of these families exhibited difficulties with their social and personal adjustment following father's return. →

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